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No favourites to declare till the first week's play is over

It's the first major of the year and most of the top players are a bit match-rusty. Yes, we have had the Hopman Cup, and Brisbane, and Sydney, but there aren't many matches the top players have played so far. On paper my favourite is Djokovic, followed closely by Federer. Both have won the tournament six times each, Roger the last two times. You have to give the edge to Novak, though, having won Wimbledon and the US Open back-to-back so this could be a third tournament for his Grand Slam, in a way.

There is a question mark over Nadal. He hasn't played since the US Open in September so hasn't had an official match in four months. It doesn't matter how much you practice, you never know where you really stand until you play. He'll be starting his campaign Monday against Australia's James Duckworth, and the whole of the tennis world will be watching. In my view, Sascha Zverev should also be considered among the favourites. His winning the ATP finals at the end of last year, beating Djokovic and Federer, puts him above the rest of his generation. He has never passed the quarter final stage of a Grand Slam so that's going to be his biggest challenge. You always have the 'outsider' – players who have lost their ranking a little bit like Nick Kyrgios and Tomas Berdych. Last year's semi-finalist Kyle Edmund is playing Berdych in the first round so that's quite exciting.

On a sad note is Andy Murray's announcement of retiring, the latest at Wimbledon. He's a very popular guy in the locker room; he may not always come across as humorous but he is very funny in the dry, British sense. He's also very popular among the ladies having always stood for prize money parity and gender equality. He has a high intellect and is considered one hell of a tactician on court. Unfortunately, the hip injury was worse than he realized; he had surgery three months ago but never really got better. I think everybody had a wet eye listening to him the other day. We all hope he finds the energy and resources to pull through so that he can retire in front of his home fans.

The ladies side is exciting, as always. Again, the seedings don't make a big difference because Simona Halep hasn't played in a while. Angie Kerber has had a good start to the year but the focus will be on Serena Williams. The last time she was here she was a few weeks pregnant and ended up winning the tournament so her 'comeback' is quite a story. Who can forget her US Open final against Naomi Osaka; the young Japanese is one of the highlights of the women's circuit, she's dynamite and everybody supports her. Then you have the likes of Karolína Plíšková, Elina Svitolina, Garbiñe Muguruza, and Petra Kvitová who are all capable of winning. Another girl I like watching, who and I see as a future champion, is 20-year-old Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus. I really like her powerful play. She and Germany's Julia Görges are names to watch out for.

We haven't seen a lot of tennis in a while, so everyone is excited. The weather in Melbourne is going to be a scorcher, it's touching 37 degrees! So it will be test of fitness and endurance. Everyone is going to have to prove themselves in the first week to really be considered the favourite.

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Second week sees gap closing between the veterans and the young ones

On the men's side, after Murray's announcement everybody came out watched his match. I thought he did good, played fine and was physically well. It's just that he got tired in the fifth set. I truly hope he reconsiders, gets his hip fixed and comes back because he's still good enough, if he's healthy.

As we go down the rest of the list, Novak, Roger, Rafa and Sascha are all through and performing well. After his injury woes, everybody wanted to see how Rafa did during the first week but he's playing and seeing the ball well. Roger will always be Roger. It's amazing how he comes back from the winter break and just plays some awesome tennis. He has not dropped a set and played great. Where Sascha is concerned, so far so good; he beat Alex Bolt easily on Saturday to make the fourth round. Novak had a bit of a wobble against Denis Shapovalov but is also through.

So, the second week is lining up pretty nicely. I must say it's been a while since we've had a Grand Slam with so many interesting first-week matches. The big names are there, and the younger generation like Frances Tiafoe, who will meet Grigor Dimitrov, Daniil Medvedev, who will face Novak, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Borna Ćorić are through. I'm happy to see the gap is closing between the young boys and the veterans.

On the women's side, I'm surprised Caroline Wozniacki is out. Maria Sharapova hasn't really played well since her comeback and this was pretty much the biggest win of her "second innings". Simona Halep struggled initially; you could tell she hadn't been playing much lately but she a fighter. On Saturday she beat Venus Williams to set up a fourth round clash against Serena. It's amazing to see some of the younger players like young Russian-American Amanda Anisimova who beat Aryna Sabalenka. What a player! And she's just 17 years old. Above all there's Serena. She's playing like before, looks fitter and tougher than the last time, and calmer. She was the player of the first week in my eyes, on the women's side.

Like I said I think everything is lining up nicely for the second week. I can't wait. I think everybody's ready for the big matches now so let's cross our fingers. For me, the favourites to reach the semis are Novak, Roger, Rafa and Sascha. On the women's, Serena... and then I couldn't tell you about the others! I really think it's going to be day by day as the women's side is more open than the men's.

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Men's final will be an undeniable classic, women's final promises excitement

Before the tournament we discussed a favourite and we said a lot about Serena Williams. But then we had others like Kvitova and Osaka who have been playing very well and I think the tournament has shown that overall both have the best complete package with Kvitova winning Sydney beforehand and Osaka winning the last Grand Slam in New York.

So how it's turned out is that they not only will they play for the title, but we will see a new ladies' winner and a new women's No. 1. So a lot is at stake for both players. Osaka has probably had the longer matches, but she's 20 years young so she should be in fine form on Saturday. Kvitova is very dangerous with her serve and powerful groundstrokes.

Kvitova is the emotional favourite after the horrific attack. She had trouble recuperating full strength in her hands let alone playing tennis. So for her to come back two years later is a miracle and she is the story of the game. But on the other side Osaka has won a lot of fans with her humbleness, honesty, and down to earth personality. She has become very popular.

I personally don't see a favourite. I think a lot will depend on who can handle the pressure more. Osaka played with enormous poise and courage against Serena at the US Open last year so I would maybe say 51% to Osaka, 49% to Kvitova. But if Kvitova gets hot and serves well she will win. So a pretty even match.

The men's final. It's No. 1 against 2; 17 majors vs 14; they are going to be playing for the 53rd time against each other. This is a real tennis classic. Both have shown in their respective semi-finals how good they can play, and how big the difference is still through the rest of the field. I expect a blockbuster, and hoping for five sets. Anybody who loves tennis has to tune in because it just doesn't get better than this!

I'm surprised how Nadal came back after such a long break. He had an injury, he had surgery. So for him to have this top form is amazing. If you had asked me before the tournament I would have said Roger and Novak were in form, and the question mark was over Nadal. Obviously he has proved everybody wrong. I have never seen him serve better, play better offensive tennis. There's something for Novak to think about because that's the Nadal he hasn't faced yet. On the other hand, I think because of Novak's history – he's never lost a final here – I would put him at 51% to win. I would have Novak as the favourite.

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Novak proves too strong for Nadal while Osaka rules the women's world

There were a lot of expectations given their final in 2012 when they played probably the best Australian Open final of all time over five hours and 53 minutes, and Novak won. On Sunday, the Serb played on just another level. We shouldn't forget that he's a seven-time winner here now. He's never lost a final; Rod Laver Centre Court is his natural playing ground. This is where he plays his best, against anybody – whether they are called Federer, or Wawrinka, or Nadal. Nobody here in the Melbourne final seems to be unbeatable. Now Novak has beaten Rafa eight matches in a row on hardcourt and grass. He lost to Rafa at Rome in the semi-finals but that was on clay. So he has the game exactly suited to play against Nadal on these courts.

Rafa started a bit nervous and hesitant, and played a poor first couple of games. Once he gave Novak that lead it was a long way back. Novak stayed so close to the baseline, hit that backhand like I've rarely seen him do before. All in all, I think he hit seven or eight unforced errors and 35 winners, and that's too good for anybody.

I don't think Nadal was allowed to play. He likes longer rallies, he likes to move the opponent around and that's exactly what Novak did to him! He moved Nadal around, he controlled the tempo, the baseline, and Nadal was thrown from left to right. There was one chance – imagine, one break point in the whole match for Nadal – in the third set when after second serve he went to rally but unfortunately made an error on the groundstroke. Given the small window of opportunity, he didn't deliver. Novak was too strong for Nadal, who never really gave him a match.

The ladies final, on Saturday, I thought was the best of the tournament. It was given more importance as the winner became world No. 1. Osaka was up a set and then 5-3 in the second with four match points. Kvitova, like the comeback woman she is, fought well. The beginning of the third set, the match could have gone any way. History is unfolding in front of us, and Naomi is the new star of women's tennis. This was her second Grand Slam win in a row (after her maiden US Open title last year) and that hasn't been done in a long time. All credit, though, to both players. It was a fantastic match.

A year ago, the 20 majors from Roger were untouchable. Now, with Rafa and Novak coming back and knocking at the door, who knows what we are going to be talking about in one year's time? They are getting closer and closer. Let's see how the next three majors develop.